



Soft Bronze

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Description: Zelus, the god of jealousy, has been imprisoned in solid bronze for the last two millennia. A simple kiss can break the spell and free him from the metal—if his lover is willing to believe. Camden Crowe isn't a specialist in ancient artifacts, but he does know how to guard them. He spends his days working as a security guard in charge of keeping the bronze statue of Zelus safe. He can't contain his attraction to the nude god. What will happen when the security geek finds out he's stronger than he ever believed and can harness the power of the gods?

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Chapter One

If only I were free of this bronze, the things I'd do to you. Zelus watched the guard strolling around the antiques store. He liked the way the guard admired his form. He'd kept himself in shape up until the moment he'd been encased in the bronze. Although he hated being trapped, he did prefer the way the metal showcased his assets. He yearned for the touch of the guard. Two thousand years without a cock made one quite lonely.

Was that why he wanted the guard to pay attention to him? Because he'd been without a cock for so many centuries?

Zelus sure hoped he wasn't so shallow—not any longer. He'd been known for his devotion once he found someone to adore. Zeus had been one of those rare souls. So had Phthonos. The fool found another person to love and had left Zelus to his jealousy.

The guard didn't remind Zelus of his former lovers. Not a bit. Instead, the thin man looked more scholarly or what the humans referred to as ... a nerd.

Being stuck in bronze for all these years, some spent buried upside down in dirt and muck and some while on display, gave him the long opportunity to observe the humans. Most of the people didn't turn his head. Far too many of them were too obsessed with themselves to even notice him. The males weren't what he liked and the women were far too thin. Did he have a type he preferred? Not really.

His celestial mate would be nice—the forever lover he'd thought he'd found in

Phthonos, but had been so wrong.

Zelus studied the guard again. The man was thin and his thick glasses slid down his angular nose. All the nights the handsome guard came to him, he'd never learned the man's name. They had some wonderful talks. He knew so much about the man. He wished he could ask. He longed to touch the man and caress his body. If he'd have been free, he'd have shivered. A vision of his dick buried balls deep in the guard came to mind. He uttered a silent groan. In and out, he'd sink into the man until they both cried out. He needed to feel a warm, wet mouth surrounding his prick ... one that belonged to the handsome guard. Would the guard allow himself to be taken completely and filled, or was he shy and needed a tender touch to get him to come apart? Zelus wanted to find out. He liked a man who could handle having his hair pulled during sex and who sucked cock deep. He hoped the sexy man would appreciate both.

"It's a shame." The guard held his hand up, not quite touching Zelus's thigh. "They decided to sell you after all. I begged them to keep you, but they refused. Not that I had the money to purchase you." He shook his head. His blond hair slipped over his brow. "You're going to a private collection. You're meant to be adored by museum patrons and studied as a classic of your time period."

Studied and adored. Zelus liked those words. He parsed through the rest of what the guard had said. Being sold? To a store? He didn't belong in a merchant area. The blasphemy!

"I tried to argue with the owners. Andy swears you have to go. They needed the money. I don't see how—they're loaded." The guard sat at Zelus's feet. "They wouldn't listen to me. I get it. I'm a guard and not that important, but a statue of your importance can't be part of a window display. He called you a minor statue meant for ambiance in a store. That's crap."

Irritation swam through Zelus. Minor statue? Andy knew better. He yearned to cry out in protest.

“I’m going to miss you. I’d planned to do my art paper on you, but you knew that. I’ve told you just about everything in my life.” He rested his head against Zelus’s thigh. “You’ve been the most understanding person. I get it, you’re not real, but you feel real. I wish you could come to life.”

I wish you knew how much I adore our talks and want to break the curse for you. Zelus bit back a silent moan. No one had touched him in so long and not with such reverence. Not even the mighty Zeus showed him so much care.

The guard moved his hand up Zelus’s leg to his thigh. He glanced up at Zelus, then inched his palm even higher to Zelus’s exposed cock.

A shiver wracked Zelus’s body, although he couldn’t show his reaction. He’d grown fond of the guard and enjoyed his touch. He wanted to run his own fingers through the young man’s hair and explore the valleys and peaks of his lanky body. The daydream from earlier, about fucking the guard, came back with a vengeance. Yeah, he wanted to dominate the younger man ... but first, he needed to get out of the bronze.

“I can’t stop them from selling you.” The guard pressed his mouth to Zelus’s thigh. “I want to. I can’t see putting you in a store. You deserve better.”

He kissed Zelus’s leg again, a little bit higher.

Please, human. Keep going. Kiss my mouth. Please, save me. Break my curse. Free me.

Footsteps thumped on the floor and the guard jumped off the pedestal. He righted his

uniform, but couldn't hide his excitement—it tented his pants. He folded his hands in front of his problem.

“Camden Crowe, what are you doing here?”

So the guard's name was Camden? Sexy. He looked like a Camden.

“I'm studying the statue for my paper,” Camden replied.

The second guard's gaze switched between Camden and Zelus. He rolled his eyes.
“When's the paper due?”

“By the end of the semester.”

“Which class?”

“Art History.”

“They let you do papers on old statues?” The guard rolled his eyes again. “Just finish your rounds. You're going to help me pack this guy up before they open the store in the morning.”

“Yes, sir.” Camden bowed his head and made his way across the room, putting distance between him and Zelus.

Zelus wished he could open his mouth. He wanted to scream. His heart ached. Camden enjoyed his company. He wanted to research Zelus. Camden could be the one to break his curse, but Zelus couldn't let him know.

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For the thousandth time since he'd been encased in bronze, he wished he could change his fortunes and chase the quiet security guard.

* * * *

Camden trudged through the rest of his shift, but he couldn't get the statue out of his mind. Only someone with issues would be infatuated with a statue. He snorted. Was he in love with the bronze? A little. God. He needed a date. He needed sex. Maybe if he had someone to care about him, then the Greek god wouldn't have affected him so much.

He ducked into the bathroom. Before he left, he needed to rub one off. Christ. His dick had been damn near bursting through his pants all night. He locked the stall and unzipped. Taking the pressure off his cock helped slightly, but the cooler air of the bathroom did little to quell his desire. He popped the buttons on his shirt, then shoved the hem of his undershirt over his head. He wanted to be naked with the bronze god.

Was he losing his shit? Getting caught up in this thing? He sat on the toilet and spread his legs. He could almost feel the hard cock in his ass. His entire body warmed. Holy shit. He wasn't with the god or even another guy, but he could've sworn he felt that cock filling him to the hilt.

He wrapped his fingers around his prick and stroked. The orgasm had already begun to build, sending tingles through his limbs and along his spine. He'd never been one to take long to come anyway, but thinking of the statue pushed him closer to the edge. His knees shook and he gritted his teeth. Just a little more. He stroked harder and pressed his lips together to keep from groaning.

A vision of the god formed in his mind. A flesh-and-blood Zelus stood before him. The god smiled at him and slowly closed his eyes. A bead of sweat slipped down Zelus's temple and the hairs on his forehead stuck to his skin. The muscles in his body became more defined with every thrust.

"Yes," Camden murmured through clenched teeth. A shiver racked his body. He pulled hard on his cock, sending jizz all over his chest. No matter how hard he tried, he couldn't catch his breath. He tipped his head back and groaned.

Whacking off in the bathroom wasn't his usual style, but he did feel better. He sighed. At least now he'd be able to get through the rest of his shift without embarrassment, plus he had a sweet memory for the spank bank. He snorted. A memory of an occurrence cooked up in his mind. Oh, well.

After cleaning himself off and righting his uniform, he met up with his co-worker, Gus, in the stockroom. "When do we wrap up the statue?" He needed a few more minutes with the bronze face he'd fallen for.

The pudgy man lumbered up to Camden and balled his meaty hands. "We don't. Andy and his partner put him in the box. They said something about us not being able to handle it. Like they're the bosses or something." He snorted and rolled his eyes. "Want to say goodbye? The truck isn't coming for another fifteen minutes. Not enough time to get it on with the man of metal, but you could rub one off—oh, wait, you did. You get wood from shit like this."

"You're a douche." He hated Gus. The guy had an attitude and arrogance enough for five men. He might not have disliked Gus so much if the man hadn't taken pleasure in insulting Cam. He never could say something nice or even normal without adding an insult. He wondered sometimes why Andy and KG had hired him. Maybe he was good with a gun. Who knew? He had the interpersonal skills of a rock.

“You’re fucked up. It’s a statue, not a real girl. You need to fuck a girl.” Gus made a gagging noise.

Oh, Christ. How many times had Gus insisted he switch sides and go straight? Camden had lost count and he always used the hell card. “I’m gay, Gus. It happens. If I go to hell, then I’ll have earned my spot fair and square.”

“It’s an excuse for your perversion. Fucking guys will get you a one-way ticket to hell.” He sneered when he glanced in the direction of the hallway. “The bosses are coming. If I wasn’t paid so well, I’d quit. I can’t stand them.”

“You’d better shut up before they hear you or you’ll get fired.” He wished Andy and KG would. Gus didn’t help unless they were around and threatened to cut his job.

Gus clicked his tongue, then rubbed one hand across his face. A bead of sweat slid down his temple. “It’s fucking hot in here. Whatever your fascination is with the metal dude, get it over with and don’t leave a mess.”

“I won’t.” He’d fallen in lust with the statue. Crazy, since the statue wasn’t a real person, but maybe it was his secret fetish—one he hadn’t realized he had until now.

“Guess the bosses are busy. Darn.” Gus said. “What is it with you and that thing?”

“I feel a kinship with the statue because of my paper. The god was pretty fascinating. Because of him, we have jealousy.” Truth be told, there wasn’t that much information on Zelus in the records. He was so minor that very few writings mentioned him, except the stories about jealousy, but Camden didn’t understand why. Zelus was probably an interesting character.

“Whatever you say, perv. He’s in the box. I’ll give you five minutes, then we’re nailing his box shut.” Gus snorted and strolled out of the room. His footsteps echoed

in the massive space.

Camden smiled and bit back his frustration. What an ass. Gus loved to insult people, especially those he didn't understand. Camden wished his bosses would replace Gus already. He stood beside the open crate. The packing straw spilled out and exposed the statue's face.

“What a shame. They should pack you in something better than straw. You should have the best. Respect.” He touched Zelus's cheek. The bronze had taken on a dark patina over the years and hid the metal's natural beauty. He knew better than to expect the statue to come to life, but it didn't stop him from wishing. Fairy tales and magic only happened in books. Life wasn't a book.

Still, he wondered what the god might have looked like if he were a real man. Dark hair with a bit of curl and body ... sparkling eyes—blue maybe ... or would they be brown? He figured the real man would have a brilliant smile guaranteed to make everyone melt to his will. He longed to run his fingers through the statue's expertly sculpted hair and over every muscle of the man's body until he came to Zelus's cock. He sucked in a long breath. The man was packing. Most ancient statues weren't so endowed. Either the artist really liked Zelus, or he'd fashioned the dick after someone he knew. Each ridge and vein were expertly defined. The cock looked so realistic. Kudos to the artist for his work.

Camden chuckled. He had to be out of his mind, fantasizing about a statue. Maybe old Gus was right—not that he'd say anything. He was screwed up. Actually, it didn't matter if he was a little different or had a special fetish. He didn't care. He liked the statue and he wasn't ready to let it go.

“I'll visit you.” He touched his lips, then the lips of the statue. A wild idea popped into his head. The next time he'd see the statue, would it be on display surrounded by palm trees, or even worse, dressed in crappy touristy clothes? Hopefully Andy and

KG hadn't sold the statue to someone who wanted to decorate their pool.

He glanced around the space and didn't see anyone. If he kissed the bronze, no one would know or probably care. He leaned into the crate and pressed his mouth to the mouth of the statue. His entire body warmed. The erection from before came back stronger. He moaned, then broke the kiss. A lip-lock with the statue turned him on. The metal didn't taste like metal ... more like the salty sweat of a hard-working man. Even the texture wasn't right. The lips felt softer, like an actual person and seemed to be kissing him back. Christ, he needed to get out more and stop allowing his imagination to get away from him.

"I wish you were real." Camden smiled, then left the statue. He knew better than to expect his dreams to come true, but his soul yearned for a man like the one portrayed in the bronze. He'd fallen in love with the statue.

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Chapter Two

Zelus stared at the roof of the room. He'd been kissed. Kissed! He touched his lips. His skin tingled. He hadn't felt tingles in a long, long time. Come to think of it, he hadn't felt anything in a long time. He glanced down at his hand. He'd moved. His skin wasn't black from the metal. No, it was the normal color—tanned from the sun, just like before he'd been cursed.

He was alive. Praise Zeus, the curse was lifted ... because of Camden. The guard's kiss had brought him to life. He needed to find his man.

"Close it up," the other guard said. He shoved the lid down on the box, sealing Zelus inside. "That perv liked this ugly statue. It's probably gay like him. I'm telling you, it needed to be sold a long time ago."

No, no. He needed Camden. "Wait." He'd spoken. When he opened his mouth, no more sound came out. But he'd come to life. He'd broken the spell.

"Was that you?" one of the owners asked. "Did you say something?"

"I didn't say anything." The guard rattled the lid. "I hear the buyer is going to cover him up. Doesn't want nudity."

"Are you sure? Why did you talk to the buyer?"

"I didn't."

“Right. I’m out.”

Zelus heard the footsteps, but didn’t relax. Someone was still nearby.

The lid moved and the hefty guard peered down at Zelus. “I know what happened and I saw what you did.” Gus sneered. “He broke that farcical curse, but he’s not here. I am. He can’t have you because I’m taking your ass out of this shop. You’re going to make me millions.” He replaced the lid and nailed it shut. “Ha. You’re not going to the buyer. You’re coming with me.”

Zelus placed his hands on the lid of the box. They couldn’t cover him. They couldn’t sell him. He was real. His heart hammered. This bastard couldn’t steal him or make money from him. No way.

Finally, he had his heart back. If he screamed, they’d know the curse had been broken, or at least they’d have him sent away from his guard. He’d have to bide his time and wait until someone opened the lid. He wasn’t sticking around for Gus to use him. Even if it took magic or begging his father, he’d get out of Gus’s clutches, then he’d find Camden.

He couldn’t believe his luck. He had finally found the person to break the curse, but now he was stuck in a crate, headed for a store’s window display.

What a time to have his powers!

He’d wait. There wasn’t much else he could do. Zelus closed his eyes. Camden broke the spell once. With another kiss and a declaration of love, he could destroy the curse forever.

All Zelus had to do was hold on.

Time passed, but Zelus wasn't sure how much. The box moved, tossing him within the straw. Being stuck upside down in dirt with only his feet sticking out had been worse than the prickly straw.

The lid opened and bright sunlight streamed over him. Sunshine. He basked in the warmth on his skin. Not quite like the heat generated from Camden's kiss, but close.

"Did they paint it?" a voice said. The man moved the straw away from Zelus's face. "He's awfully lifelike. Are you sure he wasn't painted?"

"I don't know. Don't care," another man said. "They wanted him. I delivered. See ya."

The first man peered into the box. "I've got to ask Grissom what to do next. He was expecting a black statue, not one painted to look real. He's going to put clothing on it, but still. This isn't what he wanted."

The man left the box and his footsteps faded. Zelus gasped. Holding still had been so much easier in the bronze. He sat up and looked over his surroundings. Another storage space. No one else moved around the room, but there were at least twenty oddly shaped figures. The statues, all headless, were in various poses. Some stood upright, while others appeared to be sitting. Some were female and others male, but without sexual parts. Odd. Humans didn't revel in sex any longer? He'd been in the antiques store for far too long. Part of him wanted to go back to his time when humans went to bed with just about anyone they chose and delighted in sex. The rest of him wanted to stay put. He'd never know what could happen with Camden if he didn't stick around.

Zelus touched the statues. The hard surfaces reminded him of wood, definitely not

like any marble or stone he'd encountered. He rested his hands on his hips. What did he need in order to find Camden? The humans weren't running around in the nude, so he'd need some sort of clothing. He'd admired the tight shirts and pants worn by Camden. Maybe he could find something to fit him. He strode across the room to a stack of boxes. He couldn't read the writing on them, but the blue fabric inside resembled the pants he'd seen on Camden. Perfect. He stepped into a pair of the pants, but barely got his legs into the holes. Too tight.

He grunted. He'd need another pair. But he couldn't read the labels. He grabbed another set of the pants. They appeared to be bigger. He decided he preferred his battle gear over contemporary clothing. He stuffed one leg into the pants. These went up his body much easier. He wasn't fond of the clothing and constriction, but if that meant he'd find Camden, then fine.

Voices filtered down to him. Where were shirts when he needed one? He ducked behind a stack of boxes and rummaged through them for more clothes. He slipped the first shirt he found over his head. He couldn't read the words splashed across the front, but he didn't care. He spotted a pair of shoes. They weren't what he preferred, but he needed something on his feet if he was going to make a run for it.

"It's down here. I'm telling you, the thing looks real." The man who'd opened the box strolled into the storage room. "Come on."

If the workers believed him to be real, then he wasn't safe in the storage space. Zelus worked his way around the boxes, through a set of doors. He gasped. What an outrageous space. The room swarmed with people. Clothing and jewelry decorated every surface. He'd never seen anything like the merchant space. So many items and so many people pushing colored carts. Some toted around clothing and others held odd looking contraptions. His only experiences with appliances had been more than ten years ago. One of the men from the store put him where he saw telephones and a coffee maker. He'd never tasted coffee, but wanted to try the dark brew ... later.

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A woman glancing over at him. Thank the gods, he'd picked up enough modern human language from the conversations he'd overheard through the centuries.

"Excuse me," he said, testing his voice. "Can you help me?"

The woman smiled. "Sure. What do you need?" She looked down. "Besides shoes."

"I'm looking for an antiques store. Do you know where it is?"

She smiled again. "Which one? If you mean KGA Antiques, it's across town. There's also one down by the river. Sam's Old and New Things."

"Ah... KGA."

"It's across town. Six blocks north of here on Main Street." She nodded. "It's not hard to find. Good afternoon."

Zelus glanced up at the signs. He needed to get to Camden. He'd learned to speak the language of the humans, but he hadn't learned to read the words. He'd have to do that once he found his man. He thought about the quiet guard. Camden looked so sad. If he'd learned anything while being stuck in the bronze, he'd figured out how to follow his heart and demand what he wanted—Camden. Now.

* * * *

Camden finished filling out his time card. He needed to get to class, but first he had to make sure he'd get paid. He trusted Andy and KG to cut the check. They were

upstanding guys. Gus, not so much. He tended to lose Cam's timecard, then complain about Cam not doing his job. He sighed and added up the hours. Losing his favorite statue made coming to work rough. He enjoyed having the night to talk to Zelus. The statue didn't talk back or insult him. He shouldn't have felt abandoned, but he did. First his mother, then an inanimate object. He was losing his mind.

Part of him wanted to barge into Andy and KG's office and demand answers. They'd been assholes. Well, not really. They had the right to sell off inventory if they saw fit. He had no say in what they did. Hell, he owed them. They'd brought him on as a security guard when he'd had no training and nothing to his name. They were the reason he'd started back up at college. He should probably trust their plans, even if he didn't like the course of events.

"There you are." Andy strolled into the break room. "I see you're filling out your card again. Is Gus fucking with you?"

"He claims he lost my card." He signed his name on the bottom of the card, then handed it to Andy. "Now I know you got it."

"I appreciate your thoroughness, but get used to filling those out. We fired Gus today. I'm tired of him mishandling the statues and not pulling his weight." He tapped the card on his fingers. "Speaking of statues, there's someone here to see you. He says he knows you. He's up front. Why don't you go talk to him?"

"I—talk..." His heart lodged in his throat. He wasn't good at talking to guys. His shyness always got the better of him.

"It's okay." Andy grinned. "We're here for you and listening if something goes haywire."

"Okay." He still didn't feel sure enough to talk to the guy, but whatever. Camden

made his way through the store to the lobby. When he spotted the man waiting on him, his breath wrenched from his chest.

The man resembled Zelus. Like, if-the-statue-had-come-to-life resembled Zelus.

“Hi,” the man said and extended his hand. “I’m Zelus. You must be Camden.”

“I am.” Camden wobbled on his feet. “I’m not sure how you ... are ... here.” The lobby wasn’t a small space, but the moment he locked gazes with Zelus, the room seemed miniscule. He couldn’t breathe. The statue he’d fallen in love with sure seemed to be alive and standing before him.

Andy appeared beside Cam. “Just a moment. Come with me, Cam.” He steered Cam out of earshot of the man who called himself Zelus.

“Sometimes there are things that happen that we don’t understand.” Andy gripped Camden’s shoulders. “You have to trust your gut. I know it’s hard. I’ve been through things you’ll soon understand and you’ll see how extraordinary they are. You’ll want to run and never look back. I assure you a little faith will get you through this.”

“You talk like you know what’s going to happen to me. Do you know Zelus?”

“Sort of.” Andy shrugged. “I know fate is tricky and questioning it doesn’t do you any good. I learned that the hard way. Meet my lover’s brother, Zelus.”

Camden glanced over at KG and Zelus. Brothers. He’d never realized how much the two looked alike. He’d never been attracted to KG—not the way he had to Zelus. He blew out a long breath. Andy had never steered him wrong before. He needed to put his faith on the line and trust someone. He forced himself forward towards Zelus.

“You wanted to speak to me?” He offered his hand. “Hi.”

Andy held his cell phone out to KG. “We need to handle this. Our recently fired guard is pissed and has called me every name in the book plus a few I’ve never heard. Maybe you can calm him down.”

KG smiled and took the phone. He pressed the device to his chest. “I’ll give you two some space. It’s great to see you, brother.” He grabbed Andy’s hand and strolled past Camden, leaving him alone with Zelus.

Zelus grinned. He didn’t speak, but rather simply looked over Camden.

“Okay, I’ll bite. You’re here. Weren’t you just a statue? Just a bronze taken out of here this morning?” Camden reached for Zelus, only to pull his hand away at the last moment. He feared that if he placed his fingertips on the man, he’d disappear or turn back to metal.

“I was.” Zelus wrapped his hand around Camden’s. The touch seared Cam to his core. “Now I’m not.”

He blinked. “How? Statues don’t come to life. That’s the stuff of legend and kids’ stories.”

“Legends can be true. You’ve got to believe first, but they can definitely come true. Do you believe in the impossible?”

Chapter Three

“I’m not sure what to believe.” Camden leaned on the counter for support. “Nothing makes sense.” His brain spun. Good Lord. The last he knew, the sky was blue, grass green and statues didn’t come to life. Legends were stories in books, not reality.

“It’s a long explanation.” Zelus smiled and squeezed Camden’s fingers. “Would you like to hear it?”

“I’ve got time.” He couldn’t have concentrated on his class if he’d tried. Art history in a lecture hall hardly compared to the possibility that Zelus was the statue come to life.

Zelus tugged Camden close until they were chest to chest. “I will, but first ... can I kiss you?”

“Kiss me?” The notion wasn’t all that horrible. Hell, he wanted to mash Zelus against the wall and kiss him breathless, but he had to be reasonable. Someone either wanted to make him look foolish or his world had turned upside down.

“Yes, kiss you. You broke my curse.” Zelus smiled and his dark eyes glittered, melting a bit more of the ice around Camden’s heart. “Plus, you’re quite handsome and a good kisser.”

“You’ve got to be joking.” He didn’t say anything else. What could he say? He’d kissed the statue. Did the statue—man—whatever, know what it felt like to be kissed? Had he actually felt the kiss Camden placed on his lips when he was in the

bronze?

Zelus slid his hands around Camden's body and tucked his hands in Camden's back pockets. Fire lit in Zelus's eyes as their mouths meshed.

Good thing Zelus had a hold of him. Camden's knees weakened. He'd been kissed before, sure, but never anything so overwhelming. From his head to his toes, his body trembled. He groaned into Zelus's mouth as Zelus sucked on his tongue. The man certainly felt real, and the passion ... he'd never been quite so consumed. He wanted to touch Zelus and be sure the man matched the statue, but he refrained.

Zelus pulled away long enough to pant, "You've taken my breath."

"You've got mine, so we're equal." Camden threaded his fingers into the loose waistband of Zelus's jeans. Desire so strong couldn't be happening to him. Something else had to be on the horizon to screw it up.

Zelus smoothed his hands up to Camden's shoulders. Forehead to forehead, he gazed into Camden's eyes. "I'm afraid to let go of you."

"Why? I'm not going to disappear." Although he had tried many times to drop off the grid. Having things to run from made disappearing appealing. Good to know Zelus had doubts, too. Maybe, just maybe if they were careful, they could try dating.

"Many crazy things can happen."

"Then explain." I'm attracted to you and scared at the same time. I don't even know what you are or how you got here. He kept those thoughts to himself. Never give away too much so your opponent doesn't use the information for your downfall.

"My brother said we can talk in his office. Lead the way."

“That’s what I thought he’d said, but I didn’t believe KG.” Complete and utter confusion swam in his brain. “If you’ve got a brother, how did you end up encased in bronze?”

“I will tell you everything when we’re in the office.”

“This way.” Camden shook his head, then escorted Zelus to the back of the antiques store.

Andy walked out of the office he shared with KG. His partner followed and grinned at Zelus. He clapped Zelus on the shoulder. “Good luck, brother,” KG said. “You’ll need it.”

Camden bit back a reply. KG not only looked like Zelus, but he sounded like him. Too many things didn’t make any sense. Cam sat on the edge of Andy’s desk and folded his arms. “You’ve kissed me senseless and confused me. Now it’s time for some explanation.”

Zelus closed the office door. He kicked out of the flip-flops and stretched his toes in the thick carpeting. “I’ve missed this. Nothing like going barefoot.”

“I hate sandals and going without shoes,” Camden replied. He’d never seen the point of showing off his feet. “Whatever works.”

“That’s part of the reason I enjoy you—we’re very different.” Zelus rubbed his hands on his thighs. “Where to start?” He frowned, drawing his dark eyebrows together. “I’m a god.”

“Really? You’re kidding me.” He’d heard plenty of crazy things in his life, but a real god? No way. “Humor me and explain. I’m listening.”

“My brother, Kratos—or KG, as you know him, and my sister, Bia, are the children of Pallas and Styx. They were Titans. Kratos, Bia and I were each sent to guard Zeus. In our own ways, we both succeeded and failed. Kratos ended up being sealed in marble as a statue. I see Andy freed him.”

Camden needed a moment to make sense of what he'd been told. He knew KG and the guy seemed level, but Zelus didn't. Part of him didn't want to believe, but the rest of him saw a strange logic in the tale. “I've heard of Zelus, Kratos and Bia, but I never heard of KG being anyone other than Andy's partner.”

“Would you have believed him if he'd said he was a god?” Zelus asked. “You don't want to believe me.”

“No. I guess not.” He couldn't explain any of what he'd been told, other than maybe Zelus knew how to recite stories from mythology. But why would someone want to claim the life of a minor god as their own? And why was he so damn attracted to Zelus?

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“Like Kratos, my job was to serve as a guardian and playmate to Zeus. I once had the same markings on my shoulders as my brother, but unlike modern tattoos, mine faded with time. I thought I’d done a fine job for Zeus. I protected the king and queen, then at night I shared their bed. Whoever wanted pleasure, I fulfilled their needs. Then I met Phthanos, a man at court. I fell for the man. He possessed so much strength and determination. I loved him, but he didn’t share my feelings. Zeus lost the need for me and Phthanos never truly loved me. I became jealous of the love I thought I’d had. They all found happiness without me. My jealousy consumed me and my father entombed me in bronze. He said it was for my protection. For years I hated him. Now I understand his motives. The outcome he’d planned for me far outweighs my wildest dreams.”

Camden struggled over to the closest chair. He needed time to process. Either Zelus was great at lying or he was telling the craziest truth. The statue had come to life and seemed to be infatuated with him. That statue was a god and had a brother. KG was also a god? How was that possible? He seemed so normal. Nothing made any kind of logic.

“I’ve overwhelmed you.”

“You could say that.” Camden rubbed his hands over his face. “So you’re real.”

“I am.”

“And you’ve got a past.” He still hadn’t wrapped his head around Zelus being real, but if that was the case, then Zelus would’ve had boyfriends or girlfriends before. Everyone had at least one partner, but the idea that a man could’ve turned Zelus—the

real man—down ... it seemed so far out of reality. Then again, he wanted to turn down Zelus because he wasn't sure he wasn't somehow hallucinating the whole situation.

“Would you like for me to prove myself?” Zelus asked. He sat on the edge of the desk. “I can.”

“Why not?” He doubted anything else Zelus said would convince him.

“Camden, I heard you talking to me. All those nights, I listened to every word. I wanted to answer you and to let you know I understood how you felt. You weren't alone. I fell in love with you a little more each night. Now that I'm here with you, I'm very much in love.”

“Me?” He sagged against the chair. “That's not possible.” His thoughts fogged. If Zelus was telling the truth, then the conversations hadn't been so one-sided. How about that? Camden bit back a smile. He shouldn't believe Zelus's story, but something deep within him did. The bond between them was stronger than he'd imagined. Nice. At the same time, Camden's doubts came into play. He'd never been the guy men wanted to stick with. He was an oddity. The nerd who was chic today and boring tomorrow. Even his own damned mother hadn't wanted him. Love—especially with a god—wasn't in the cards.

“Camden?” Zelus knelt in front of Camden. “What don't you understand? Enlighten me, please.”

“Okay, you're real. You must be or you wouldn't be sitting here in front of me. I'll give you that, but you can't be in love with me. You only know the cranky, sobby crap I told you. Besides, you're a god. If you're really a god, then you can have whomever you want and do so much better than me. I'm not worthy of you.” Wow. He'd just made himself out to be less than significant to anyone, much less a god.

“Why would you discount yourself? Because of things you can’t control? Because of your past and the things you told me about while you visited me? I assure you, the past has nothing to do with my feelings.” Zelus folded his thick arms. “There have been plenty of things I couldn’t control. Being encased in bronze comes to mind. My past isn’t exactly neat. I slept with many people all at Zeus’s behest. I gave my heart to a man who wanted my position, not my love. Trust me when I say I wish I could change what I’ve gone through, but I’m glad I had that as my past.”

The guy sure knew his stuff or was at least sticking like hell to his story. Fine. Then Camden would go with it, too. Zelus was a god and Camden wasn’t partner material, even for a date, with a deity. “Zelus, you don’t get it. I know guys like you.” He needed to make Zelus understand. Rather, he needed to push Zelus away before anyone got hurt or someone got wise to Zelus’s story. Distance always worked better for Camden than keeping people close.

“Other than Kratos, you’ve met other gods? Who else has come to earth?” Zelus stood and barged into Camden’s personal space. “I demand an answer.”

Christ. Either Zelus wasn’t paying attention or he had a sick sense of humor and his story was about to collapse. Camden sighed. “Honey, the world is full of gods. There are countless men who think they are the world because they used to be someone important. I like you, but I’m getting the feeling you’re no better than those men.” And yet, he still liked Zelus.

Zelus bunched his dark eyebrows. Creases formed around his sparkling eyes. “I don’t understand, but I’m glad you like me because I do love you. I’m also not lying to you. I lived on Olympus and Kratos was there, too. I can have him explain, if that helps.”

Camden stood and flattened his hands on Zelus’s strong chest. Tingles shot from his palms to his own chest. Letting go of Zelus wouldn’t be easy. The god—if he was telling the truth—had wormed his way into Cam’s heart. No, he needed to be strong.

“I’m glad you like me. I’m honored. Flattered. But I’m not the type of guy that men chase. I’m a temporary guy. I’m flattered you chose me, but you need to find someone of your caliber.”

“No, I’ve chosen you. The curse has been broken by you. I refuse to let you go.”

“You don’t have any choice. I’m not sticking around, so you’re going to have to cut me loose.” Camden pushed past Zelus and left the office. His brain overflowed with information and he needed to breathe. He wanted to believe Zelus loved him. Wanted to buy into the story about Zelus being a freaking god from Olympus, but his better judgment came into play. Yes, he wanted to embrace the god and those white-hot kisses, but men like Zelus didn’t believe in sticking around. Camden refused to be left behind again. His heart couldn’t take the beating a third time around.

Zelus stared at the door. Running after Camden had been his first thought. But if he went with his instincts and chased the man down, he wouldn’t solve his problem. He’d be letting his emotions get the best of him. He cared about Camden and loved him. Camden liked him, too. It was time to let fate decide if they were truly meant to be together, but he wanted nothing more than to push fate in the right direction—his.

“He left.” Kratos strode into the office and up to Zelus. “Freaked out. He’s rambling about how he can’t believe a damn thing you’ve said.”

“If you mean I scared him, then yes, I freaked him out.” Zelus shook his head. Camden didn’t believe him. Not good. He focused on his brother and learning as much as he could about his human. “You’ve found happiness with Andy. I’m proud, but I wonder. How did he break your curse? Moreover, how do you keep him happy?”

Kratos sighed. “Andy and I required time and trust—two things you don’t have.”

Wonderful. Zelus sighed and stared out the window. So much world waited for him, but he wanted one man. Wouldn’t Zeus laugh? He’d offered Zelus the world and Zelus turned everything down for love. When he tried to get back into Zeus’s good graces, he’d been thrown away. Now love was going to bite him in the ass. “I don’t know how much time I have to get him to trust me. Be honest. What do I need to do? I tried being honest, but he thinks I’m lying.”

“I’m not surprised that he thinks you’re telling stories. What we’ve gone through is beyond comprehension to many. It’ll take him a while to come around, but you’ve got to have faith. Believe me. Andy needed time.” Kratos sighed again. “You are on borrowed time until he’s willing to be your celestial mate. The effects of the curse are on hold. If you can’t find your mate, then you’ll be stuck until he can accept his fate and you as well.”

Zelus plopped onto the chair. He held his head in his hands. “I just want him to say he loves me.”

“You’re wanting more than he can do right now.” Kratos squatted in front of Zelus. “The fact that Camden listened to you is a start. He also put separation between you. That’s another plus because it means he’s thinking over what you’ve said. Someone hurt him and he’s not going to just hand over his heart. You’ll have to earn it. Show him that you love him and give him a chance to come around.”

Everything his brother had said made sense and still, Zelus felt so behind. “I’ve observed so much about humans and I don’t understand something. He said there are gods everywhere. These gods believe themselves to be superior to others. How? Are there other gods descended from Olympus?”

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Kratos stood and hooked his thumbs into the belt loops of his pants. “Camden is referring to human gods. He means ... well, let me show you.” Kratos helped Zelus to his feet and steered him to the front of the store to a large window. “See those men over there?”

Zelus watched the men drinking coffee and talking. Some of them wore tight pants while others dressed in vibrant colors. All of them had their hair perfectly coiffed and were muscled, but thin. Some sported deeply tanned skin. “I see them, but what are you getting at?”

“Gay men, like a lot of those guys over there, set themselves up to crazy high standards. They want to have the best muscles, the least amount of body fat ... who has the better hair. the most designer stuff. It’s superficial. Not all men are like that, but some are very worried about appearances. My guess is that Camden isn’t one of those guys. He’s not looking to get involved with someone who sees him as a novelty. Once that uniqueness wears off, the guys who only pay attention to looks will shove him aside or push him into being someone he’s not. Andy was like that. He feared my being a god would make me not want him for the long term. He worried I’d cheat on him and was only with him for the sake of the curse. It took me a while to convince him otherwise.”

Huh. Even in this day and age, the simplicity of appearance dominated the humans. He’d thought that concept might change with time. “What made him change his mind?”

“Time. I’m still here with him. Still devoted to the man I love. I don’t care what he looks like—although he’s very sexy.” Kratos bumped shoulders with Zelus. “His

heart. That's what pulled me in. I have no desire to stray. Every day I show my love, he falls more for me, too."

Zelus nodded. He hadn't planned on leaving Cam. No, he wanted to take each moment and learn more about the man he craved. He'd wait forever in the bronze if that's what he needed to do in order to earn Camden's love. "Then what do I do? I'm in love with Camden. I don't want anyone else."

"Give him some time to process. Then love him to pieces." Kratos winked. "You've got a foothold. Don't think he's totally written you off. He's interested." He tapped on the glass. "I've had this theory. It takes more than a kiss to free us. The attraction must be mutual. There's something about you that drew him in, just as he drew you in. Give it some time and kiss him like you mean it."

Ah, more than the kiss. That's what Camden must've meant with his cryptic statements about not working out. He wanted his man and no one else. "Where did he go?"

"He's with Andy in the stock room. Gus showed up and argued to get his job back. We're not bending. You were supposed to be in the box, but not shipped. As soon as I found out he'd been the one to deliver you, I fired him. I never trusted him, but he'd had good references. We were fooled, but won't be any longer."

"He's trouble? Gus?" Zelus rubbed his chin with the back of his hand. "Interesting. Are you concerned this man is something other than what he presents himself to be?"

"My instincts were never to trust him," Kratos said. "I've kept an eye on him and allowed him to think he had more control in his job than he did because I wanted to test him. If we were on Olympus, he'd have been gone long before now."

"Then I will keep my guard up around him as well," Zelus said. "What about

Camden? What can I do? Will Andy help?"

"Andy's been in Camden's shoes. If anyone can explain who and what we are, then it's Andy. He's persuasive, but also understanding."

Zelus's resolve strengthened, but a new emotion took hold. Fear. "I don't know what to do. I'm worried he won't accept me, no matter what Andy says. This is a lot for the humans to understand." His attempt to explain hadn't worked. For all he knew, it made the situation worse.

"Yes, there's a lot to go through. Seeing something inanimate come to life is overwhelming, but we kind of had an inside track on you and him—which is why you weren't supposed to be shipped." Kratos winked again. "I knew you were my brother and that there was a chance you'd find your celestial mate if you were in my possession."

Zelus bit back the urge to roll his eyes. "Oh?"

"Yeah, Andy and I located you in Olympus. You were one of the many statues on the mountain."

"I remember." How could he forget? When stiff winds encircled the mountain, he worried he'd be toppled from his pedestal. Would his face be dented if the sculpture had been dented?

"I made a point to find you. I wouldn't rest until I did. We are family and share an unbreakable bond. With Andy's help, I brought you here to find the person to break your curse. When we saw Cam looking at you, we figured he was more than just drawn to your artistic beauty. He's a shy kid and Andy, being the observant one, figured he needed a little push. Then admitted he liked you and kissed you."

“So you sold me?”

Selling you to Grissoms was a lie. We made the name up and didn't have a shipping address. I don't know where you were taken, but I am sure Gus was involved in removing you.”

Plenty of things made sense now. The change in his fortunes, the kiss ... the box. “I went to a place with other statues. The room was much like the stockroom here, but not this place.”

“I didn't know there was another antiques store in town.” Kratos scrubbed his hand across his mouth. “It's a good thing Gus is no longer the head of security. If Gus shows up again, I'll deal with him.” He patted Zelus's shoulder. “Go to the back. You'll see Andy and Cam. Be patient, but lead with your heart.”

He'd led with a sword and armor. Now he'd have to learn to let his emotions run his life. Fine. “Thanks, brother.”

Chapter Four

Camden folded his arms and sat on one of the crates near the garage door. He'd come back to the stock room to think. Everything he'd been told shouldn't make sense. Statues weren't able to come to life. Yet, that's what Zelus had done. Camden had fallen in lust with the statue version of Zelus because the man's sensuality had called to him. Now the actual man claimed to love him. How was it possible for Zelus to love him so fast? They didn't know each other. He sighed. Logic dictated Zelus's story had to be bogus and the love wasn't real, but part of Camden believed. He had to be losing his mind, right?

Camden spotted Andy across the room. He didn't really want the company, but he respected Andy and appreciated Andy's concern.

"There you are." Andy strode up to him. "Are you okay? You look blindsided."

"Gee ... wonder why?" He shouldn't be terse with his boss, but the words tumbled out before he could take them back.

"What's going through your mind?" Andy asked. "I've been in your place. Ask me anything. I'll do my best to help."

Cam sighed. Too many thoughts were stuck on shuffle in his brain. "I feel like I've been swatted across the skull with a chunk of rebar." He stared at his folded arms. "One minute I'm talking to a statue and the next, there's a guy who looks like the statue. The guy says he's in love with me and I should believe he's a god. It makes no sense." He noticed a shadow moving along the garage door windows. "What's that?"

“Christ. That’s Gus. The man won’t leave.” Andy pulled his phone out of his pocket. “Let’s go to the apartment. We can talk there while Kratos comes in here to deal with our former employee.”

He followed Andy out of the stockroom and up the stairs to the apartment. He’d been up there a hundred times while on patrol around the building, but he’d never taken the time to appreciate the details in the apartment. The custom curtains, thick carpeting in rich maroon, and old furniture had probably come from the antiques shop. He loved the details and lushness surrounding him.

Andy closed the apartment door and blew out a ragged breath. “Okay, that’s better. Now, where were we?”

“You’re going to convince me I shouldn’t be fazed by Zelus coming to life.” He flopped onto the couch. “I’m guessing you’re going to try to talk me out of my shock over the whole thing.”

“I won’t try to talk you out of anything,” Andy said. “Seeing a statue come to life is crazy. I remember when KG showed up. I didn’t believe him.” He sat beside Camden and rested his elbows on his knees. “All I’m saying is there was a curse and it was broken for a reason. You crave this man. I can see it in your eyes. Don’t run away. You could be left again, sure. KG could step out on me, but at least we tried. We gave one hundred percent. Who’s to say he’s not your forever person?”

Having someone be his forever sounded good. Too good. Physically, Zelus was all he’d ever wanted. So far emotionally he fit the bill, too, but lives and loves changed. He couldn’t get the what-ifs out of his head. “You’re throwing us together anyway, aren’t you? I’m not doing anything in your apartment.”

“Like you’d be the first to have sex up here? Not exactly. I thought you knew this was our home away from home,” Andy said. “As for you and Zelus, you never know

what could happen until you fuck a few times.” He grinned. “Sex is a great way to get to know someone.”

“Nice.”

“The thought of being with Zelus hasn’t run through your head at least a hundred times? You did a lot of talking to him when he was still in the metal. I heard some of your one-sided conversations. You’ve got it bad for Zelus.”

“I might.” He’d whacked off to the notion that he and Zelus could actually be lovers. “But my words are just that—words. I’m attracted to him and I’d love to be fucked by him, but he says he’s in love. I don’t know.”

“No one says you have to love him right now. If you’re meant to love him, it’ll happen, but it might take time. My suggestion? Wear a rubber, ride him to Canada, then rinse and repeat until you’re sure.” Andy grinned. “Do it. You know you want to.”

“You used to be much more reserved.”

“Hey, when you find exactly what you want in the last place you expected, you learn to get out of yourself.”

The door opened and Zelus stepped into the room, followed by his brother. KG strode up to Andy, who stood. “Are we interrupting something?” KG asked.

“Not at all.” Andy wound his arm around KG’s waist. “Didn’t we have some inventory to deal with? A couple of calls to make? Something like that?”

“The police are here to speak to us about our former employee. The man won’t leave the premises.” He kissed Andy on the temple. “Why don’t we talk to the cops and get

the Gus thing sorted out?”

“Yes.” Andy’s brow crinkled, but he smiled and turned to Camden. “You two have fun and remember what I said.”

“We will,” Camden said. He waited until Andy and KG left before speaking. He didn’t like Gus hanging around and didn’t trust him. He believed his bosses had the situation under control, but still. He faced Zelus. “Hi.”

“Hi.” Zelus stuck his hands in his pants pockets.

Camden blew out a long breath. “It appears I broke your curse. How?”

“With your kiss.” Zelus nodded to the couch. “What do we do?”

“According to your brother and his partner, we screw and you get to stick around. I’ll fall in love with you in time.” He patted the cushion. “Sit. I’m still sorting this all out.”

“I understand.” Zelus kept space between them, but ended up on the couch. “First, let’s kiss. We need to be sure we want to do this.” He inched closer to Camden. “I know I’m fascinated with you, but I don’t want you to be unsure about me.”

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Camden opened his arms and tugged Zelus onto his lap, facing him. He'd never been the forward type, but he remembered what Andy said. Go for what he wanted. He licked his lips. "Kissing sounds good." He placed his hands on the god's thighs. He tasted the salt of his lover's kiss still on his lips. He leaned forward. Flecks of gold and dark green sparkled in Zelus's eyes.

"I need to know where we stand," Zelus gasped. Camden mashed his mouth onto the god's and savored the taste of his kiss. His synapses misfired. He couldn't think, could just feel the softness of his lover's mouth on his. He groaned and trailed his fingers along Zelus's sides.

"I like this," Zelus puffed.

"Me, too." He liked the way Zelus's facial hair scraped his own cheeks. A twinge of uneasiness slipped into his head. "Can you have a false positive?"

"Pardon? I'm not sure what you mean."

"Like, can the curse be temporarily broken?" Camden palmed Zelus's pec through the thin fabric of his shirt. His nipple beaded and Zelus bit back a grunt. "How can you be sure I'm the right one? What happened between us could've been a cosmic accident."

"No."

"No?"

Zelus cupped Camden's jaw in both hands. "Do you wish to be free of me and the curse?"

"I'm not sure." The longer he sat with Zelus, the more he wanted to shatter the damn curse. "I've—I've never thought about someone the way I've obsessed about you. I never imagined I'd settle down with one man." Kind of. He'd never found anyone who wanted to settle down with him. Down to his core, he'd always been the boyfriend type. "Give me a chance."

Camden pinched Zelus's nipple. "You mentioned kissing." He bit Zelus's bottom lip. Christ, he liked the way his man tasted. His blood sizzled and his neurons worked overtime. Desire coursed through his veins. When he glanced into Zelus's eyes, he felt the mutual passion. Zelus took the lead this time, sucking Camden's tongue into his mouth. Electricity gripped him from within. He wanted so much to be thoroughly fucked by the god—then to turn the tables and fuck Zelus until they both collapsed.

"Are you making me feel like this?" Camden asked, when they parted for air.

"Like how?" Zelus swiped his thumbs along Camden's cheeks.

"Like being horny as hell."

"I can't make you feel anything." He kissed Camden's nose, then his cheeks and chin. "I can only hope you return my feelings and make love to me."

Camden closed his eyes and blew out a long breath. "You're so polite."

"I've been schooled in the ways of manners." Zelus kissed him again, swiping his tongue along the seam of Camden's mouth. "I know what I want—you. I might be a god, but I know how to work."

“You’ve worked pretty hard to get me to make up my mind.” Had he decided he wanted a little more from Zelus than a quick fuck?

“I have.” He pressed his face to Cam’s neck, nibbling up and down.

Cam needed to make a decision. Follow his heart or his dick ... what if they led him in the same direction? He squeezed Zelus’s ass. In his entire life, he’d never felt so alive or wanted. He opened his eyes. “Then take me.”

“Yes?” Zelus stopped kissing him and looked up at him. “Are you certain?”

“Yes.” Cam nudged the god off his lap. “We need a couple of things first.”

“Oh?” Zelus wobbled to his feet. “Like?”

Camden rummaged through the side table. If he knew his bosses the way he thought he did, then they had to have supplies everywhere. He found exactly what he needed and held up the small bottle. “Lube to grease the way and a rubber. Can’t be too careful.”

“Most human objects I know. This one confuses me.” Zelus pointed to the condom wrapper. “What is this?”

“You use it to cover your dick.” Camden placed the condom and the lube on the cushion beside him. “Until we trust each other enough and know we’re both clean, we have to use the rubber.”

“You foresee more than one encounter between us?”

“I do.” Camden reached forward and grabbed the front of Zelus’s shirt. With their gazes locked together, he shoved the soft cotton over the god’s head, exposing his

chest. He'd seen that chest so many nights, but covered in bronze. He moved on instinct, pressing his face to the musky muscle.

"My human." Zelus slid his fingers into Camden's hair. "So very smart and sexy."

Each touch sent tingles through Camden's body. He leaned back enough to look up at his lover as he unbuttoned the denim. The bulge in Zelus's pants poked at him, but he didn't care. The jeans fell to the floor, leaving Zelus nude before him. He'd seen every part of Zelus when he'd been in the statue, but to see the real man stole his breath. Hard in most places and wrought with muscle, but soft in others.

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Camden fell to his knees and licked his lips. “I’m not smart.”

“I’m sure you are.” Zelus knelt between Camden’s legs. “Let me help you.” He pulled on Cam’s pants. “Show me everything.”

Camden stood, then shucked his jeans and boxers. His cock pointed toward the ceiling. “I’m sure you tell all of your playmates they’re sexy. It’s a good way to get in your lover’s pants.” He sounded like a jerk, but he needed to keep a little bit of his guard up.

“I speak only the truth.” Zelus stood before Cam and brushed a lock of his hair from his forehead. “You’ve been hurt before and I’m sorry. I wish we’d met before I was locked in the bronze. Your sweet nature and kind spirit would’ve saved me two thousand years of suffering.”

“I’m not that ... exciting.” Camden swallowed past a lump of emotion. Zelus kept wanting to put a lot of responsibility on him. How did the god know Camden had such power? Christ, he barely had faith in himself.

Zelus wrapped his hands around Camden’s dick. “You’re more than you know.” He stroked Camden. “So much more.”

Camden closed his eyes. Each stroke, each pull nudged him closer to ecstasy. Using his hands and rubbing one off in the bathroom hadn’t been enough—only being with Zelus would sate his need.

“Ah,” Zelus said and hummed. “My human enjoys my touch.” He increased his

speed, jerking on Camden's dick. "I like to please my partner."

"You do it well." Damn, Camden was on the edge.

"We can't waste much time and I'd like to savor the precious hours we do have." Zelus cupped Cam's balls. "So handsome. I could spend all day simply gazing at you." He bent over and flicked his tongue across the blunt head of Camden's prick. "Kneel on the couch. I want to see that ass."

"Yes, sir." Camden shivered and did as Zelus commanded. His lover had him right at the point of coming apart, but he craved having the god in his ass. They needed to be one. Whatever emotion was sparkling between them, love was certainly the main ingredient.

"The gods lied." Zelus smoothed his hands over Camden's bare butt. "They said perfection only came from Olympus." He buried his face in the crease of Cam's ass. His tongue slid over Cam's hole.

Camden shivered. Each lick, nip and nuzzle wound around his brain. Holy shit. He breathed out and sighed. Something behind him clicked. Probably the bottle of lube. Cool liquid dripped between his ass cheeks. Definitely the lube.

"Beautiful." Zelus breached the tight ring of muscle and inserted one finger, then a second into Camden's hole. The move stretched and prepared Camden for Zelus's invasion. Camden ground his hips and buried his face in the cushions. The happy tingles in his body resumed. He slipped one hand beneath his body and stroked his own dick.

"I can't wait any longer," Zelus growled. "Using my hand on you is good, but I need to be inside you." He eased his fingers from Camden. "Breathe for me, love. Move with me."

“Yeah,” Cam replied. His entire body tensed as Zelus pushed inside him. Inch by inch, the god claimed him. Pressure built within Cam’s being. He groaned and shivered again as Zelus sank balls deep. They’d become one. “Zelus.”

“Yes.” The god moved his body, pulling out, then pushing into Camden. His fingers bit into Cam’s hips. “By Zeus and all that is holy, I name you as my celestial mate.”

Celestial ... what?Cam didn’t have a chance to think through what his lover had said. Instead, the orgasm splintered within him and he cried out. Zelus increased his thrusts and echoed Cam’s whimpers.

Zelus smacked Cam’s ass and moaned.

Camden opened his eyes and panted. He’d been jerking himself off in time with Zelus’s thrusts, but hardly realized what he’d been doing. Only Zelus mattered. He collapsed fully on the couch, smearing cum between his body and the cushion.

The room spun and he fought to catch his breath.

Zelus pulled out of him and stretched out between Cam’s body and the back of the couch. “My love.” He kissed Camden on the shoulder. “I’ve missed sex. I never realized how much I needed this—needed you. Back on Olympus, the couches are much wider. We should have one custom made so this is easier.”

“We have beds. King size. Plenty of room for us to stretch out.” Cam grinned. “Or cuddle tighter together.”

“I’d like to explore one of those king-sized beds.”

Cam trailed his fingers down the side of Zelus’s face. “I have one of those beds.” He wriggled in Zelus’s embrace. “My feet hang off the end of most beds, so I got a big

one. My only luxury.”

“Then take me to your home. Give me a chance to show you my love is true,” Zelus said. “And to try out that bed.”

Chapter Five

Camden stared at Zelus. Take him home. The idea wasn't foreign to him. He'd brought home lovers before, but there was something different this time. Things were happening too fast, despite the way his heart craved Zelus. "What if there isn't enough time? What if the curse isn't really broken?"

"Then it's not. I'd rather be with you and have these few hours of joy than never know the man who had the capability of breaking the curse." Zelus smoothed Camden's hair away from his forehead. "I want to learn about you and see you where you're comfortable. Please?"

Zelus made a lot of sense. "I'd rather have sex in my bed than here."

"Then I'm with you." Zelus climbed off the couch first. He struggled back into his clothes. "I'd like something else to wear than this. I don't mind the pants, but I'd rather something less constricting."

"I've got a couple things that will fit you better." Camden sat up and sighed. The heaviness of the situation wore on him. He'd rather go home and sleep, but he had the feeling Zelus wasn't in the mood to nap.

Zelus stood before him, completely dressed and almost like the clothes were made for him. "Why did you choose to study art?"

No one had asked him that since he'd filled out his application for entrance to the college. "Beauty. I love beautiful things." He dressed, then collected his keys, phone,

and wallet. “When I was a teenager, I dated these popular, pretty girls. I thought it was because I was attracted to them, but when we’d get time alone, I never wanted to do anything. Guys were a different story.” He shrugged. He’d hadn’t talked about his formative years in a long time.

“What was it about women that didn’t grab your attention?”

“I liked their clothes, attitudes, the way they carried themselves and their grace. I’m clumsy. Walking a straight line can be a challenge. I realized I wanted to be like the girls and hang out with them, but I’d rather suck a dick.” He tensed and met Zelus’s gaze. “Sorry. That was blunt.”

“I appreciate blunt.” Zelus hoisted Camden to his feet. “You wanted to look at the women?”

“And draw them. I went to college originally to become an English teacher, but when I took a drawing class, I fell in love with the human form. I switched majors right then and there. I’m not beautiful, but beautiful things make me happy.”

Zelus cupped Camden’s jaw. “You’d love Olympus. Everything there is elegant.”

“I wouldn’t be. I’d stick out.” He rubbed his cheek against Zelus’s hand. “Should we go?”

“Yes.” Zelus slid his fingers down Camden’s throat to his chest, then along his arm. “Who says you aren’t pretty?” Before grabbing Camden’s hand, Zelus swatted his ass. “You study beauty so you should know that attractiveness is in the eye of the beholder. To me, you’re handsome as any statue or god.”

“You’re being too nice.” He strode out of the apartment and down to the ground floor. Andy and KG were behind the counter. Camden nodded. “We’re going to head

out for a while.”

“Don’t do anything we wouldn’t do,” Andy called. “Remember what I said.”

“I will.” Camden bowed his head and left the store. He held Zelus’s hand and made his way across the parking lot. “I’ve read stories about Olympus. Is it truly as perfect as the tales make it out to be?” He opened the truck door for Zelus. “Climb in.”

Zelus didn’t speak until Camden rounded the truck and sat beside him. “Olympus is pristine. The grounds, the landscape ... it’s gorgeous. The gods and goddesses aren’t.”

“The fighting isn’t just the stuff of mythology?” He backed out of the parking spot. “Huh. I thought it was all made up.”

“We fought often and over foolish things. That’s why many of us are in statue form. We would cause trouble and rather serve our punishment in marble, bronze, terra cotta ... gold. Most of us didn’t survive the passage of time.” Zelus placed his hand on Camden’s thigh. “So this is a truck. I’ve ridden in them, but while in a box.”

“My father gave this truck to me. It was his and when he went to Michigan with his new wife, he left the truck. It’s not much, but it gets me around.” Camden sped along the main road through the campus to his apartment.

“You were given an object and I was turned into one.” Zelus laughed. “How the world works is certainly peculiar.”

“Sounds harsh.” He pulled into the apartment complex parking lot, then into his spot and parked.

“Maybe, but I learned the lesson.”

“Ah.” He pulled the keys from the ignition. “So this is Kent’s and my apartment complex. I’ve lived in this town all my life. One of these days, I want to visit Europe—where Olympus is.” Camden left the truck. He’d opened up to Zelus more than he had to anyone. Even Andy and KG didn’t know this much about him. He opened the passenger door for Zelus.

“You will,” Zelus said.

“Will what?”

“Go to Olympus.” Zelus laced his fingers with Camden’s again. “I’ll take you there.”

“Right.” He made his way up the sidewalk. Rivers, one of Camden’s neighbors, stood on his patio. Camden waved.

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“Hello.” Rivers strode up to them. “Who is this? And why haven’t I seen you before?” He slid his gaze over Zelus. “Damn.”

“Who are you?” Zelus asked.

“This is Rivers,” Camden said. “Rivers, this is Zelus. He’s new in town.”

“Then why’d he pick you up?” Rivers blurted. “Well, if you come to the club tonight, then look me up. I’m a good time, too. Better than you think.”

Camden squirmed. He’d hoped this wouldn’t happen. He loosened his grasp on Zelus’s hand. “You can go with him,” he murmured.

“Why?” Zelus tipped his head.

Zelus had stumped him. Maybe he wasn’t kidding about his attraction. Camden let go and unlocked his apartment door. “Bye, Rivers.”

“Why don’t I come in?” Rivers rounded Camden’s patio. “Where are you from? Do you like to ... fuck?”

Camden nudged Zelus into the apartment, then faced Rivers. “Do I show up at your door and make lewd comments to your boyfriends? Do I poach the guys you bring home?”

“They wouldn’t choose you over me,” Rivers said. “I don’t get why this guy did.”

“Because not everyone is taken in by your fantastic body and pushy attitude. Go home, Rivers.” He closed the door in his neighbor’s face. His heart hammered and his knees wobbled. Holy fuck. Standing up for himself felt good. Empowering.

“You questioned the power of the gods, but you proved your worthiness.” Zelus caged Camden between his body and the door. “My brothers and sisters would be proud.”

“Zelus.” He wanted to run, but didn’t. “I still don’t know what to think about your story. Gods, goddesses ... Olympus. It doesn’t make sense. I don’t understand why the curse chose me.”

“Because you’re worthy.” Zelus nuzzled Camden’s neck. “I loved our talks. I fell for your vulnerability and the desire you keep hidden.”

“I’m the only one who spoke.” He rested his hands on Zelus’s hips. “I rambled.”

Zelus met his gaze. “You revealed a lot. I got to know you. The men you dated, the ones like that pushy one outside, never wanted the sweet and kind man they had. Looks are great, but a man must have a pure heart, too. I know. I didn’t have a pure heart for a long time.”

“That’s poetic.”

“I told you I speak the truth,” Zelus said. He wedged his knee between Camden’s legs. “This is your home?”

“It’s not exciting, but it’s mine and I’ve got the bed.” A shiver ran the length of his spine. “Do you want to see the bed?”

“Why do you discount everything? Your truck, your living space. Yourself.” Zelus

curled his fingers under Camden's chin. "You're more than you think. You've been undervalued."

"I call it realistic."

Zelus shook his head and crowded tighter to Camden. "You don't see your true worth. The guys you dated didn't appreciate you. Your mother gave up on you and your father gave you a means to escape. They made you stronger, but also wary."

"You're right." And cut Camden deep.

"They didn't see what I do. Your kiss helped to break the curse, but your unpretentiousness and honest desire are keeping me here," Zelus said. "There's something special about you that brings out my desire to protect you."

The words sounded great and the emotions behind it were probably honest, but Camden wasn't wary for nothing. "What do you want from me? I broke your curse. Go find someone like Rivers and have good times with him or her. You're going to see I'm not that exciting. Just go now before my heart gets involved any deeper."

"Don't want to."

"You're only staying so you don't hurt my feelings. Don't pity me." He'd keep digging until Zelus understood. He didn't want Zelus to stick around if he felt forced.

Zelus shook his head.

"Zelus." Christ. Why wasn't he doing what Camden wanted?

"Have I lied?" Zelus leveled his gaze at Camden. "Have I said something that's wrong? Anything?"

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“No.” Not that he knew, but still. His heart was involved. He’d become attached to Zelus. He wanted to get to know the man and feel him moving within him again. Was it love? Too soon to tell, but there was definitely a connection.

Zelus placed his hand over Camden’s heart. “When confronted by a god with powers beyond your comprehension, most people would want to exploit the situation. They’d want me to conjure things for them or use me for standing in the community. They’d find ways to use the magic for their desires. The man who happens to be the god isn’t as important as what can be done for the person.” Fire lit in Zelus’s eyes. “You had the chance to be that way, but aren’t. Exploiting me never crossed your mind.”

Camden stared at Zelus. The god was right—being selfish with him hadn’t crossed Camden’s mind.

“Now that you know, what do you want from me?” Zelus asked.

“Nothing.” He hadn’t needed to consider his answer. He wanted love and devotion, but he wanted those to happen naturally—not because Zelus felt compelled to do so.

“Are you sure?”

“If I’m going to be selfish, I’d like another round of sex. For a guy who was trapped in metal and couldn’t fuck, you’re good at it. I’ll be walking funny, but I’ll know we had a good time. One I can think about later when this is all over and look back on with sadness, but pride.” He slid his hand over Zelus’s. “Being together means a lot to me because it’s you.” And soon, he’d be cast aside like he had by his other boyfriends.

“You don’t want riches or a physical change? No superior strength or fame?”

People asked for those things? “No. I’m not perfect, but I’m okay with me. I don’t understand why I’m not enough to keep anyone around, but I don’t want you to change me.”

Zelus kissed him hard. He slid his tongue between Camden’s lips. Camden sagged into him, breathless. He wound his arms around Zelus for support. Zelus broke the kiss and rested his forehead on Camden’s.

“That’s how I knew you were worthy,” Zelus said. “I’ve lain with many a man and woman who haven’t been. My heart and the magic aren’t wrong.”

“Zelus.” God, he wanted to believe. So much.

“I’m right here.”

“I need...” To be fucked within an inch of collapsing. No, he needed a few moments to think things through. “My head is swimming.”

“You want sex?” Zelus nibbled along Camden’s jaw. “I want to be with you again, too.”

“I need a rest.” Bone-deep weariness overcame him. “I want to believe you, but I’m scared this will be a dream. I need a little bit to get my head straight.”

“I assure you this love isn’t a dream.”

He still wasn’t sure. Things were happening too fast.

“Sleep.”

He met Zelus's gaze. "Come with me. I want you to make love to me, but I need to recharge first. Will you sleep with me? I don't want to rest when you're awake." Seemed rude.

"I've been asleep in the metal for centuries. I need to stretch."

Ah, that's what Camden thought. If he crashed, then Zelus would dash. "Fine. If you want to come back, then you're welcome. If not, I understand." His heart would go with Zelus, but he wouldn't beg for him to stay.

"I'm not leaving." Zelus let go of Camden. "I protected the gods on Olympus. Now, I'll stand guard for you."

Camden shrank away from him and bowed his head. "I want to argue, but I can't. My bedroom is this way." He strode into the next room. "The bathroom is right there and the kitchen is along the back wall of ... I'm sure you saw it. If you're hungry, help yourself." He stripped, then collapsed on the bed. His thoughts were too full of Zelus and his body overwhelmed. He needed to recharge and hoped Zelus would still be there when he woke.

* * * *

Zelus kept watch over Camden as he settled. He wanted to hold Camden, but gave him space. The more he pushed, the more he'd put distance between them. He drank in the beauty of Camden's body. The man didn't know his attractiveness and that made him more intoxicating. He wished Camden saw his worth.

Zelus wandered through the small apartment. Camden didn't have much besides the big bed. The sofa appeared worn and probably secondhand. Camden lived simply—a far cry from Zelus's family in Olympus. He liked the differences. Modesty had a certain charm.

He spotted a group of photographs. He'd seen cameras and the change in technology during his times in the various studios. The people in the photographs caught Zelus's attention. Camden stood with the other individuals. Some of them featured him laughing and others had Camden moved to the edge of the image. At least two had Camden standing with another man. A pang of jealousy hit Zelus hard. He wished he were the man making Camden grin. He wanted to hold him and soothe Camden. He'd known there would be others in Camden's past—they were the ones who'd made him wary, but Zelus wanted to make up for the deficiencies. Maybe that was the point his father, Pallas, had wanted him to learn—he needed a valid reason for his jealousy. He should care about Camden's happiness over his own.

He headed back into the bedroom and stripped. He moved the blankets, then stretched out beside Camden. Nothing mattered except for Camden and winning his love. He pressed his bare body to Camden's and his world righted. He felt Camden to his soul. Would the curse be over soon? He wasn't sure, but he trusted Camden.

Chapter Six

Camden woke and flopped onto his back. He noticed the warm body beside him. Zelus. Holy shit. He stared at the god and tried to stay still in order to not disturb him. He watched Zelus sleep. The man personified beauty as he slept. He almost looked like he had when he'd been a statue, but without the black metallic finish—and the erection.

“Damn,” Camden whispered. He wanted to touch Zelus, but held back.

Zelus blinked. “Hi.”

“Hi,” Camden said. “I thought you weren’t going to sleep.” He chuckled. “Guess you’re not infallible.”

“Never said I was.” Zelus dragged in a deep breath, then exhaled. “Felt good to sleep on my back.”

“Rather than your feet?” He liked the change in tone between them. The tight and tense feeling had turned into easy and comfortable.

“Well, yes.” Zelus rolled on top of Camden. “Now that I’m more awake, I’d like to show my appreciation for your rescuing me.”

“Zelus.” Appreciation... Through sex?

Zelus kissed him. He rubbed his erection against Camden’s and slid his fingers into

Camden's hair. The feel of skin on skin, dick along dick spurred Camden on. Zelus kissed his way down Camden's body, from his nipples to belly, then down to his groin. He wrapped his fingers around Camden's cock.

"You're hard," Zelus whispered.

"With you touching me, uh, yeah." He rocked into Zelus's fingers. He was on a hair-trigger. "I'll blow my load in seconds if you don't slow down."

"Might be fun." Zelus flicked his tongue across the tip of Camden's erection.

"Oh ... fuck." He balled his hands in the blankets. He wanted to touch Zelus, but a bit afraid. He panted. "Zelus."

"Yes?" Zelus engulfed Camden's dick in his mouth. He swallowed Camden to the root and bobbed his head.

Rational thought left Camden's mind. The only thing he could do was experience Zelus. He panted. He could get used to this kind of attention.

Zelus wasn't trying to push the pace. Instead, he allowed Camden to dictate how fast they went. Camden wasn't sure what to think since he always bottomed and tended to be directed rather than lead. Zelus acted like an equal, despite being a bit pushy. Camden liked the directness.

Zelus's hair tickled Camden's belly. Camden groaned. "Zel..." The orgasm built low in Camden's belly and tingles spiraled to his limbs. He threaded his fingers into Zelus's hair. "I'm going to ... oh, shit."

"Come for me," Zelus said between licks. He plunged his mouth down on Camden's erection once more and resumed bobbing his head. He buried his nose in Camden's

pubic hairs. While he swallowed Camden to the back of his throat, Zelus slid one finger between Camden's ass cheeks. He toyed with Camden's hole.

The combination of sensations—being swallowed and teased—sent Camden over the edge. His restraint snapped and he groaned again. When he opened his mouth, no sound came out. He embraced the orgasm. He closed his eyes and basked in the floaty feeling overtaking him.

Zelus swallowed Camden's cum, then licked him a few more times to clean up the mess.

Camden opened his eyes and sighed. "What a wake-up call."

"You were already awake." Zelus sat back on his heels and arranged Camden's legs over his thighs. "Where is the lubricant?"

"Drawer." He slapped the top of the nightstand, but didn't reach the handle on the drawer.

"I'll get it." Zelus leaned over him and retrieved the bottle. "I want to keep you loose." He popped the cap, then dribbled chilly lube down Camden's ass crack. His cock bumped against Camden's hole.

Zelus wasn't inside him, but the act of rubbing him was so hot and tender. Camden panted. His legs trembled. "Zelus."

"Yes?" Hunger shimmered in Zelus's eyes. He slid one finger into Camden, working him open. "What do you want?"

"You in me," he replied. He didn't have to think about his answer. He bore down on Zelus. "Please?"

“Good.” He slid his finger out of Camden, then lined his dick up with Camden’s hole. He pushed. Although he moved slowly at first, he worked into a steady rhythm within seconds. Camden groaned. He loved the exquisite torture of being stretched and filled. He’d never felt so used, but cherished. He basked in the tenderness in Zelus’s touch. This wasn’t a quick fuck or something done to pass the time. There was a connection between him and Zelus.

Zelus moved in and out of Camden’s body, building on his rhythm. He kept his gaze focused on Camden. He kissed Camden between thrusts, then grunted.

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Camden sucked in a ragged breath. Zelus overwhelmed him. Were they moving too fast? A little, but he loved being with Zelus. He wasn't sure he wanted the connection to end. He didn't want Zelus to return to the metal.

"Cam." Zelus sat back on his heels again and folded Camden in half. He held tight to Camden's thighs. "Mine."

Camden nodded. He might be overwhelmed, but he knew where his heart belonged—with Zelus.

"You are mine," Zelus said. He increased his speed until the rhythm turned feral and jagged. "All mine."

Camden had no words. He wasn't going to argue. He relaxed as much as possible and enjoyed being possessed. He arched his back and clawed at Zelus's arms for stability.

"Cam." Zelus tipped his head back and surged into Camden. A growl ripped from his throat and his cock throbbed deep in Camden's ass. "Camden." He added a few more thrusts, then stilled. "My..."

Camden sagged against the bed. Zelus knew how to wring him out. He wound his arms around Zelus's neck. He'd never find anyone like Zelus. He wasn't sure he wanted to, either.

"Wow." Zelus kissed Camden once more, then withdrew from Camden's ass. He stretched out beside him. "You make focus impossible."

“You’re pretty great, too.” Camden rolled onto his side and splayed his hand over Zelus’s heart. “I’m worn out.”

“You’re beeping,” Zelus said. “What is that? Your phone?”

He listened for a second, then bit back a groan. “Yes, it is. I have a daily alarm set to remind me it’s almost time for work. I have the morning and closing shifts. Gus had the one in between until he was fired.” He sat up. “I need to shower and get dressed so I can leave for work.”

“I’ll come with you.”

“To the shower?”

“And work.”

“You can’t be a security guard.” What if the curse came back?

“Why not? I protected Olympus.”

Camden nodded. “I guess you did.” He patted Zelus’s thigh. “Then come with me. We’ll shower, then head to the store. Maybe KG will hire you to work with me since Gus is gone.” He’d rather work with Zelus anyway.

“Good. I disliked Gus.”

“Me, too.”

“I hated the way he spoke to you.” He left the bed and stood in front of Camden. “He has no respect. He planned on selling me.”

“How? You were already supposed to be sold in that sham deal.” Camden shook his head. “Let me guess. Gus saw a chance to make money?”

“He did.”

“Well, he can’t try anything now. He’s been fired and your brother won’t allow him onto the property again.” Camden stood. “Let’s shower.

“I’ll follow you anywhere,” Zelus said.

For the first time since he’d freed Zelus, Camden believed him. The relationship was very new, but it existed. The lust had taken root and turned into something more. He wasn’t ready to admit the words out loud, but he’d fallen for Zelus. Could he admit the truth in his heart before the break in the curse ran out? He wasn’t sure.

An hour later, Camden escorted Zelus back into the antiques store. He needed to proceed with caution, but something had changed between them. He headed into the office. “Andy? KG? Can we talk?”

“Of course.” Andy rested his elbows on his desk. “Zelus. Good to see you.”

“Would you be interested in hiring Zelus for Gus’s job?” Camden asked. “He worked as a security specialist in Olympus. He knows how precious the statues and everything else is.”

“I agree.”

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Camden paused. He hadn't expected Andy to agree so quickly. "Wait, what?"

"I agree." Andy nodded and shuffled papers about. He pointed to a file. "How are things? Will this be temporary or permanent?"

Oh, shit. "Uh..." Camden hated stammering and sounding like he wasn't sure, but he wasn't. "Is this the moment I'm supposed to tell Zelus I'm in love with him?"

"You can't." Kratos stepped into the office. He had both hands in the air. His natural tan had paled. "He's got a gun."

"What?" Andy hopped up from his chair. "What's going on?"

Gus pushed into the office. "Everyone hold still and no one gets hurt." He aimed his gun at Zelus. "You're mine. He broke the curse, you're coming with me."

"I refuse," Zelus said. He stepped in front of Camden. "Shoot me with your pistol, but I am not your object."

"You're a guy who turned from a statue into a guy. Yeah, you're going to be mine and I'm making a mint off your ass," Gus said. "Your time is up. Let's go so your boy back there doesn't get hurt."

"Camden?" Zelus glanced over his shoulder, his skin darkened. "Do you love me?"

The words were there, but no sound came out. All Camden saw was the gun.

“Jesus, you take forever.” Gus held the weapon to Zelus’s chest. “If I can’t have you, then no one will.”

Zelus offered Camden a sad smile, but did nothing else. The metal overcame him, encasing him in the dark tomb once again.

No. It wasn’t possible. He loved Zelus. According to his boss and the god, that was supposed to break the curse. False positives were possible, but not probable. He gritted his teeth. Damn it. He’d finally found a guy who liked him and the sex was beyond comprehension. He’d found a reason to open his heart. Now he had a gun aimed at him and the man he loved was encased in bronze. What crappy-ass luck.

“You were going to sell the damn statue. What do you care if I take it? I’m fired. I’m using my severance pay to buy him.” Gus waved the gun. “Fork him over.”

“You can’t have enough severance pay to afford him. We’re not forking him over. Besides, the sale was bogus and I’ve depressed the silent alarm,” Andy said. “The police will be here in seconds.”

“I don’t care.” Gus grinned as his gaze slipped over to Camden. “Oops.” He gave Zelus a shove. “Let the cops take me. They’ll want to know what the hell you’re doing here with a guy humping a statue and a guy who claims he was a statue and has come to life. I’m going to be the least of their problems.”

The mighty bronze tipped and swayed. Camden tried to reach for it, but his reflexes were too slow. He grasped, but Zelus slipped from his fingertips. The bronze toppled sideways. Cam watched in slow-motion as the side of the statue caved in. The face of his love shattered as Zelus collided with the ground.

“But I love him,” Camden murmured. He sank to his knees and placed his hand on Zelus’s shin. “I love him.” His heart splintered in his chest. He’d lost the love of his

life.

“Don’t cry.”

A hand touched Camden’s face. Camden knew the voice. He opened his eyes. Instead of the shattered and destroyed statue, Zelus lay sprawled on the floor beside him.

Zelus grinned. “Hi.”

“Zelus.” Camden hugged the man he craved.

“Well, now I’ve seen this twice,” Gus said. “Holy fuck. Statues are not living things, but you’re alive. You’re also mine.” He aimed the gun at Zelus. “But this time you’ll die.”

Zelus lifted his hand. White light shot from his fingertips. “No one can take away the man I love and no one else can take me from him.” The light encased Gus, coating him in a sparkling sheen. “No one fucks with my family, either. The curse that captured me is now yours. If you have a true love, then he or she is the only one who can save you now.” When Zelus flicked his fingers, the light brightened and blinded Camden.

When the light dissipated, the gun clunked on the ground. Camden looked around for Gus. “Where is he?”

“He’s right there.” Zelus pointed to the statue. “He’s a bronze.”

Camden slid his gaze from Zelus, to the statue, then to Andy and KG. “That happened, didn’t it?”

“Uh-huh,” Andy said. “I didn’t set off the silent alarm. We don’t have one.”

“Good thing Gus forgot that.” Camden turned his attention back to Zelus. “You stopped him”

“I did.” Zelus touched Camden’s cheek. “Now, someone said something about love.”

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“You heard that?” Camden thought he’d regret muttering he loved Zelus, but the regret wasn’t there.

“I heard you say you loved me,” Zelus said. “Do you?”

“I fell for you the first time I saw the statue. Love doesn’t usually happen overnight, but it can happen. I want to spend every day finding out if this love between us can get stronger.”

Zelus nodded. “This love is for real.”

“Aw.” Andy nudged KG. “While this is adorable to watch, we ... have something to do.”

KG folded his arms. “I’m glad to have you back, brother. Only one more and we’ll be a family again.”

“Soon.” Zelus turned his attention back to Camden as KG and Andy left the room. “I love you.”

“Love you, too.” Cam cradled Zelus in his arms. “I don’t know exactly how all of this will work out, but I’m glad I found you. Think we can make it?”

“I do want to try.”

Another white light blasted into the room. This time, two figures stood where Andy and KG had vacated. Zelus straightened. “Father.”

“Father?” Camden whispered. He stood beside Zelus, then shrugged out of his shirt. “Use this to cover your junk.”

The man who looked like an aged version of either KG or Zelus nodded. The crinkles around his eyes were deeper and his hair tinged at the temples with white. “You’ve broken the curse and accepted this human.”

“I have, Father.” Zelus wrapped the T-shirt around his waist and clutched the cotton to cover his dick. “This is my human, Camden. Cam, this is my father, Pallas.”

“Holy crap,” Cam murmured. He extended his hand. “It’s a pleasure to meet you.”

“Do you wish to take my son as your celestial mate?” Pallas shook hands with Camden. “He’s a special man.”

“I do.” Cam grinned. No hesitation. No reservations. He knew who he loved and they’d find their way together.

“Then by the power of Zeus,” the second man said, “which is me, I welcome you to Olympus.” Zeus shimmered, then disappeared.

“He shows up fast and jets in a hurry, doesn’t he?” Cam waved his hand through the sparkles where Zeus had stood. “I didn’t realize the gods sparkled, either.”

“Only on very special occasions.” Pallas rested his hands on his hips. Cam wasn’t sure how old the man was, but for being probably a couple of millennia old, he looked good. Pallas notched his chin. “Your brother insisted on coming back to help you. Are you willing to help your sister?”

“She’s in bronze, too?” Zelus asked.

“No, she’s in iron. When she bound Prometheus to the rock and he escaped, Hephaestus turned her to iron as punishment. Hephaestus refused to deal with her and the violence ensuing from Prometheus. Will you help her?”

“We will,” Camden said. He clutched Zelus’s hand.

“Your human has quite a bit of faith.” Pallas smiled. “He will serve you well in your journey. Goodbye, my son. Come to Olympus now and then. Your mother also misses you.” He waved his fingers and disappeared.

“Wow.” Zelus sagged against Camden. “I never thought I’d hear my father, the man who encased me in bronze, telling me he missed me.”

“He cares. He’s got a funny way of showing it, but he does care.”

“I care about you. Let’s chase our forever.”

“Sounds like the best plan.”

Six months later...

Zelus stared out at the city below. He liked living above the antiques store and having his brother next door. The walls were thick and offered enough privacy that no one heard anyone else’s business. He grinned as he watched the cars snake up and down the streets. He’d been forced to learn so much about the humans since the curse had been broken. Camden proved to be patient beyond comprehension. He helped Zelus navigate the world and accompanied him to Olympus to meet the rest of the family.

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Footsteps thumped on the floor of the roof behind him. When he glanced over his shoulder, he noticed KG and Camden.

“Hi.” Zelus reached for Cam. “What’s happening?”

“You’ve picked up the lingo well.” KG grinned. “I’m proud. I’ve also found Bia in her statue form. It appears she’s been added to an installation with other figures in a gallery in New York. Because I’ve still got finesse, I managed to buy the statue. If I’m right, her likeness will remain in the statue, but she’ll be free of the iron.”

“You know who her celestial mate might be?” Camden asked. He slid his hand over Zelus’s ass and gave it a squeeze.

Zelus shivered. Ah, he loved his mate. “Like with us?”

“I’m not sure who her mate is, but I do know she’ll have a better chance of finding that person in a carefully controlled environment.” KG wriggled his eyebrows. “Who knows ... she might have someone that needs that push, too.”

“Understood.” Zelus stuffed his hand into Camden’s back pocket. “We’re in, whatever you need us to do.”

“For now, you’ll be in charge of keeping her safe. Once she’s at the store, my crack security team is in charge of her protection. Got it?”

“You bet,” Cam replied. Zelus didn’t need to answer. He trusted Cam to make decisions just as much as he trusted Cam to know exactly what he needed. They truly

were a pair.

“Cool. I’ve got to make some calls. We’ll talk when I get more details.” KG waved, then left Zelus alone on the roof with Camden.

“It’ll be good to see my sister again. I haven’t spoken to her in years.” Zelus rested his head on Cam’s shoulder.

“Like two thousand years?”

“Something like that. She must’ve been turned after I was. I bet she’s scared. She was always the smartest of us, but violence followed wherever she went.” Zelus stared at the blue, purple and pinks stretching across the sky. “Enough of her. You’re here.” He kissed Camden’s neck. “I’m glad we decided to see this through. I love you.”

“I love you, too.” Cam tugged away from Zelus. His shoulders trembled and he turned his back on Zelus. “There’s something I need to tell you.”

“I’m sure it’s nothing I can’t handle.” Zelus gave his lover space, but he still yearned to touch him. “Talk to me. I’ve been encased in bronze and forced to watch the world pass me by for the last two thousand years. I’m a good listener.”

“I’m—I’m not sure how to start.” Camden sat on one of the patio chairs and rested his head in his hands. “It’s screwed up.”

“Okay.” Zelus dragged the other chair next to Camden’s and sat beside him. “Take your time.”

Camden pressed his hands together as if he were about to pray. “Might as well start at the beginning.” He stood and laced his fingers together behind his head. “When I was a kid, my parents ... they were good people. They encouraged me to do what I wanted—like to be in plays if I wanted to, or to play baseball. When I was twelve, my

step-father was killed by a drunk driver. I didn't eat. Wouldn't play. All I wanted to do was sit in my bedroom and be alone. My mother handled the loss differently. She withdrew, too, but she took the bottle with her. She knew before I did that I was gay. Compound that with losing my step-dad and she shut me out." He stopped moving and stared at Zelus. "One day I'm her kid and she's proud of me and the next I'm dirt. I bet you can understand being cut out of everything you know."

"I do." Zelus stood and opened his arms to Camden. They were so much alike—him and Cam. They'd been through hardships, survived and found each other. Now they'd never have to be alone. He also had a pretty good idea of where Cam was going with his speech. His heart ached. Cam's mother was still alive and still thought about him. She might have cut him out of her life, but he'd never really died the way she insisted.

"Dad wasn't a simple guy. He'd go away for long periods of time, but he'd always come back in time for my baseball games or my plays. Like I said, Mom shut down when he died because she'd discovered the stuff he'd been hiding. It turns out he'd go off for those days in order to see his boyfriend. He had another life."

"Wow," Zelus gasped. He stroked Cam's back. He wasn't sure what else to say.

"She wouldn't tell me about Devin and insisted he wasn't real. When I came out, that's when I found out the truth. She blamed my father for making me gay. Do you believe it?" Cam's shoulders shook. "Someone cannot make someone else gay."

Zelus didn't suppose so, but he'd been encouraged to be himself. He'd observed the humans and noticed how they categorized each other, rather than allowing them to be individual. He couldn't comprehend someone telling another person what they could or couldn't be.

"On my eighteenth birthday, I came out. That night, Mom informed me that I no longer existed to her. Dad couldn't be true to her and neither could I. It's a lot of shit

to put on a kid.” He shook his head. “That was the last night I talked to her. I hate being abandoned. First Dad—although it wasn’t his fault—not really. Then Mom. For a while there, I didn’t think I could attract a man who loved me for me—geek and all. I thought I found one, but he turned out to be a dead end.” He stared at Zelus. “That’s why I had a hard time believing you. My heart knew the truth, but it took a while for my brain to catch up.”

“I promise you.” Zelus tugged Cam into his arms and rested his forehead on his lover’s. “I’m yours. No matter what, I’m devoted to you. Never forget that. Geeks are very sexy.” He grinned and kissed Cam on the lips. “You’re the sexiest man I’ve ever known.”

“Thanks.” Cam offered a wobbly smile. “Anyway, that’s my past. That’s me, warts and all. If you can accept that, then we’ve got a bright future.”

“I can accept whatever you throw at me. I’m always yours and this future we’ve started is bigger than the gods. It’s perfect.”

The End